MALARIA FACT SHEET
SUMMARY

WHAT IS MALARIA?

Malaria is one of the most severe public health problems worldwide.

It is a leading cause of death and disease in many developing countries, where young children and pregnant women are the groups most affected.

Malaria (from the Italian 'mala aria', meaning 'bad air') is a blood disease that destroys red blood cells and prevents the flow of blood to vital organs.

It is caused by PLASMODIUM parasites that are spread from person to person by mosquitoes.

Mosquitoes act as a vector - they pick up the plasmodium parasites when they bite people infected with malaria and then pass the parasites on to the next person they bite.

Malaria parasites are only spread by female mosquitoes which only bite at night.

STATISTICS

At least a million people die from malaria each year.

90% of the deaths are in sub-Saharan Africa.

70% of the deaths are of children under 5.

That's equivalent to one child dying of malaria in Africa every 30 seconds.

Put another way, 7 jumbo jets full of children disappear because of malaria every day.

WHERE MALARIA IS FOUND?

Malaria has been eliminated from the United States and other developed countries.

It is still a threat to more than 40 percent of the world s population occurring in many parts of the tropical world and in some parts of the subtropics.

It is most common between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn.

Geographic Distribution - http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/distribution_epi/distribution.htm

TREATMENT
Malaria is treatable if the infected patient is reached quickly.

The remote nature of many parts of Africa and other malaria affected regions, the difficulty of recognising that a patient has contracted malaria and not some other disease and the lack of available medicines all contribute to effective treatment not starting quickly enough. The result: many people die.

Prevention, for example using bednets, and treatment go hand in hand in combating malaria.

Treatment includes the use of drugs and ensuring the availability of those drugs in a timely fashion, something that is a constant challenge given the remoteness of many parts of Africa.

Unfortunately the malaria parasite has become resistant to many drugs, such as chloroquine, which have been used to treat it successfully in the past. Substantial research is needed to find new drugs that can be used in the fight against malaria.

PREVENTION
No one action will beat malaria.

Prevention and treatment are complimentary tactics used to fight malaria and are achieved through:
- the use of bednets, preferably treated with an insecticide
- removing areas of water where mosquitoes breed
- house spraying with insecticide
- educating people as to the value of all of these actions to help prevent malaria
- and monitoring mosquito populations to understand which insecticides they are sensitive to
- medicine